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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on qualitative research in mountainous, rural areas of Tajikistan to reveal the complex and contradictory effects of the Soviet collapse on the life and work of teachers. While within the former USSR, Tajikistan experienced comparative modernization, but the Soviet collapse and 6 years of civil war left the republic with a ruined economy and very poor social indicators. The transition to a market-driven economy was chaotic and resulted in unimaginable wealth for a few and tremendous hardship for the majority. The education system is also in a state of misery. The post-Soviet system continues the dogmatic approaches and hierarchical administration of its Soviet predecessor and is underfunded, inequitable, ineffective, and riddled with continuing tensions. Socio-historical research focused on the life histories and experiences of five secondary school teachers ("core participants") at three sites in the Badakhshan province, as well as focus groups with a total of 36 teachers. All the core teachers had taught in both Soviet and post-Soviet times, were reform-minded, and represented ethnic and gender diversity. Themes of the teachers' experiences included sorting out ideological and political confusion, coping with the lack of basic services and needs (including food and heat) after the breakdown of Soviet infrastructure, increased professional challenges and decreased support, effects of the market economy on student attitudes, the spread of drugs and violence, teacher demoralization and powerlessness, moments of hope amidst despair, opposition to a narrow technical-rationalist view of teaching, and reactions to decentralization and other external educational "reforms." (Contains 63 references.) (SV)

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Globalization's effects on teachers' life and work: Case studies from rural, mountainous Tajikistan

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Introduction

As one of the most popular terms of the end of 20th century, globalization signifies a number of drastic changes in all aspects of our lives. These changes are reflected in political, economic and cultural arenas. Globalization as a social construct could be expressed through neo-liberal, critical theory and post- modern vocabularies (see Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). The general thread among all the various discourses is the notion that within globalization, the decisions and actions conducted in any part of the world have direct, rapid, radicalizing, multi-pronged, and far reaching implications (Giddens, 1999). Amongst the several features of globalization (e.g., reduction of state's role, free move of capital, free-market economy, expansion of capitalism, communication revolution), a number of scholars have also highlighted the collapse of the USSR. Giddens (1999) for example, suggests that globalization explains both why and how Soviet communism met its end. According to him, the Soviet Union and the East European countries were comparable to the West in terms of growth rates until the early 1970s. After that point, they fell rapidly behind. Soviet communism, with its emphasis upon state-run enterprise and heavy industry, could not compete in the global electronic economy. The ideological and cultural control upon which communist political authority was based similarly could not survive in an era of global media with its cross-border penetrating effects.

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Contradictions of the Collapse of the Soviet Union

In the former Soviet Union globalization realized itself through Gorbachev-initiated reforms that led to the collapse of the USSR. Perestroika (call for reconstruction) and Glasnost (call for openness) carried amazing rhetoric that encompassed all spheres of human life: political, cultural, socio-economic and educational. The political rhetoric included the establishment of muti-party democracy, independence, human rights, pluralism, freedoms, and equality for minorities. The socio-economic and cultural promises included cultural and linguistic revival, freedom, justice, hope, connection with other communities and the larger world, --a world of unlimited opportunities. The educational rhetoric was well captured by the Russian Ministry of Education's principles of deidelogization, decentralization, diversification, humanization, relevance, freedom of discussion, cooperative learning, child-centred pedagogy, and flow of new ideas and innovations (Ekloff & Dneprov, 1993). For the external critiques, the realization of the above promises was impossible without the demise of the communist ideology, and the "evil empire." They juxtaposed the Soviet system with the Western. For the internal critiques, the lack of these realities was more of a question of deviance from and infidelity to the true and real Marxism-Leninism. They juxtaposed Marxist-Leninist theory with its Stalinist practice and suggested that these concepts existed in the works of the Marxist classics and the policy documents of the Communist party and Soviet State, which claimed that Soviet Union was the most democratic and just society that human beings could have dreamt of. In both cases, however, the critiques emphasized the deficits of the Soviet system. The solutions suggested as a result of this one-sided negative critique were perceived simplistically; the future will be better than what is now and change is easy and will occur within a short period of time. This article, drawing upon the findings from the qualitative study conducted in mountainous and rural areas of Tajikistan reveals the complex and contradictory effects of the Soviet collapse on the life and work of the teachers. The study was conducted between 1999 and 2001 as part of the requirements for the fulfilment of the PhD degree at the University of Toronto.

Specificities of globalization in Tajikistan

Globalization in Tajikistan was accompanied with a number of specific factors, which could be highlighted as follows:

- The Soviet collapse was not only and not so much of an internally-driven event; it was simply imposed on the Central Asian societies;
- The new (i.e., post- Soviet) form of governance was imposed in Tajikistan through violence and civil war;
- Globalization took place in the time of nation-state building and identity construction;
- Capitalist advancement with its neo-liberal ideology (see Wilson & Whitmore, 2000) tried to replace the pending communist ideology and came into a clash with Islamic globalizing forces; This led to a simultaneous revival of the existing and frozen traditions and their encounter with the forces of secularization and westernization;
- Globalization's advancement was mediated by regional powers and new regional and global games;
- The nature of changes was too radical and complex nature, and too rapid to conceptualize and implement;
- Despite of communication revolution, the geographical isolation of the area, accompanied with the Russia's grips over the CIS borders and lack of infrastructure has made it hard for information to both enter and exit from the region;
- The society and together with it the education system were simultaneously struggling with the challenges of survival, maintenance, and improvement; and,
- The structural changes (i.e., the creation of the post-Soviet structures) were carried out by people with a mindset enveloped by the outgoing Soviet practices and culture.

The study's context and design

The next two following sections will describe the context of the study and the methods used

to collect and analyse the data.

The Context: Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Province (MBAP)[1] of Tajikistan

Eighty percent of Tajikistan's population lives in rural areas, and mountains cover 93% of its territory. Tajikistan belongs to the countries formed as a result of the socialist revolution in the Russian Empire in 1917 and united as republics within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). As an independent republic, Tajikistan emerged from the "ruins" of the Soviet Union in 1991.

While within the USSR, Tajikistan experienced a comparative industrial, educational and cultural modernisation (Curtis, 1996; Niyozov, 2001, pp. 93-118). After the collapse of the USSR and six years of civil war (1991-97, see Gretsky, 1995), Tajikistan, already one of the poorest states of the USSR, re-emerged with social indicators similar to those of very poor developing countries. Its per capita annual income, for example, averaged about $ 350-425 CDN; more than 80% of the population was living below the poverty line. The protracted civil war killed an estimated 50, 000 people and displaced around 600, 000. The economy was ruined and Tajikistan several times verged on national and economic collapse (for more on Tajikistan's general situation in the last decade see Curtis, 1996; Djalili et al., 1998; Keshavjee, 1998; Niyozov, 2001).

Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Province (MBAP) of Tajikistan lies in the high Pamir Mountain Range. Deep green valleys riddle its West; the East is a cold, high plateau desert. As with many other mountainous areas, the province's fundamental quality is its incredibly complex geographic, biological, social, cultural, and economic diversity.

People in Badakhshan live at the elevations between 1000 and 4000 meters. In the province's lower parts, the weather is almost subtropical, and there are even citrus tropical fruits. However, in the higher areas, there is extreme scarcity of vegetation.

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[1] Throughout this chapter, I also refer to Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous province as Badakhshan and Pamir. Other titles for the province appear in the literature, among them the Russian term, Gorny-Badakhshan, and the Tajik phrase, *Wiloyati khudmukhtori kuhistoni Badakhshon.*

Culturally, MBAP is the homeland of six small Eastern Iranian ethnicities also known as Pamirians: Shugnani, Roshani, Wakhi, Ishkashimi, Yazgulami, and Bartangi. These ethnicities speak their own distinct languages and live in the different valleys.[2] MBAP is also a land where two larger nations (Iranian Tajiks and Turkic Kyrgyz) and two branches of Islam (Sunni and Ismaili Shi'ite[3]) have lived together for centuries (Keshavjee, 1998). In this regard, MBAP has the important distinction of being the only place in the world where Ismaili adherents constitute a majority of not only the population but also the Government and non-governmental decision-making structures (Keshavjee, 1998). At the same time, the post-Soviet transitional period has seen not only the revival of the Badakhshani cultural and linguistic identities, but also the encounter of various forces of an increasingly globalised world: socialism (including Communism), Islam (including Ismailism), and nationalism (including ethnic nationalism and regionalism) (see Sagdeev & Eisenhower, 1995).

Economic diversity has flourished since the collapse of the USSR, when the centralised, state-run and tightly-controlled economy was dismantled in favour of a pluralist, market-driven economy. Accompanied by chaos, overwhelming pace of changes, lack of experience in a market economy and a crisis of ethics, this "freedom", among a few positive things, also gave birth to illegal, socially and ecologically harmful socio-economic activities, such as unemployment, drug trafficking, gun running, armed violence, and poaching of endangered species. Consequently, contrary to its initiator's promises, the socio-economic transition has provided access to unimaginable wealth for a few, meanwhile causing tremendous impoverishment, misery and hardship for the majority (IGS Asia Report, 2001; Keshavjee, 1998; Niyozov, 1996).[4]

The present situation has deep historical roots and far-reaching implications for Tajikistan's future. Within the new meaning of the old geo-politics, Tajikistan, and perhaps other Central Asian

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[2] Not all population of MBAP speaks the Pamirian languages. In Darvaz, Wanj and parts of Ishkashim, Tajik is spoken.
[3] Ismailism is a major branch of Shi'ite Islam. For discussions on Ismailism, see Daftary, 1990; Keshavjee, 1998).
[4] Keshavjee (1998), Niyozov (2001), and Tayler (2001) have observed that the majority of these beneficiaries constitute the former Communist elite. According to these authors democracy has benefited the ex-Communism more than Communism did.

states, like many developing countries, appear to have been re-assigned subordinate roles in the new world order; dependent followers, receivers of external wisdom and solutions, providers of raw materials, fields of experimentation, and buffer states in the strategic zones of interests of the larger forces (Keshavjee, 1998; Rashid, 2002; Sagdeev & Eisenhower, 1995).

To successfully navigate between these realities and take advantage of them so as to serve the interests of the emerging, but culturally rich Tajikistan will, among other things, depend on the quality of its education and human resources. Ultimately, it will be the Tajik people who will decide Tajikistan's future role and status within the Central Asian region and the whole world at large. The degree of success in this regard will depend on their intellectual abilities to critically understand, adapt and reshape the post-Soviet realities to their personal and common benefits.

The Educational Context

Tajikistan's education system, as its economy, unfortunately, lies in a state of misery. The current social, economic, and educational crisis testifies to an unsustainable and largely dogmatic approach to development in Soviet and post-Soviet educational and social policies and the contradictions between rhetoric and reality in their implementation. Soviet Marxist-Leninism, for example, talked about empowerment, independence, human agency, equity, freedom and democracy for people of all nations, languages and convictions (Nazarshoev & Nazarshoev, 1984). In reality, however, the expensive infrastructure, the universal and free schooling, the demanding curriculum[5], the high level of literacy, the promotion of gender equality, national cultures and languages, and the high status of teachers all had fundamental flaws. These apparently noble ideals were compromised and, ultimately, discredited by the system's and its leaders' dismissal of the questions of relevance and sustainability, identity and freedom, and culture and context. By employing a monistic, ideological, and reductionist interpretation of reality (Davies, 1989; Ekloff & Dneprov, 1993; Karlsson, 1993), the State and Party leadership promoted dependency, colonial

[5] Demanding pro-Soviet loyalty and belief, in addition to whatever intellectual achievements.

bias, indoctrination, dogmatism, compliance and reproduction of the status quo (cf. Belkanov, 1987; De Young & Suzhikova, 1996; Medlin et al., 1971; Roy, 2000; Shorish, 1984; Simis, 1982; Wilson, 1992).

The teachers too, regardless of their high social status and broader political and professional roles, were trained to the role of obedient servants of State and Party (Denisova, 1990; Ekloff & Dneprov, 1993; Melnikov, 1997). In sum, the history of the Soviet Union and Soviet education reveals a continuity of an eternal struggle between the egalitarian, emancipatory theories (slogans) and the practices of corruption, personal greed, repression, cynicism, hypocrisy, inequity, colonial biases, and disempowerment that have been promoted under these slogans and theories. As a result of all these dogmaticized approaches, post-Soviet Tajikistan has inherited a socio-political and economic infrastructure, including the educational system that is unsustainable, ineffective, and riddled with continuing tensions. The World Bank (1999) has found several major structural and cultural problems in current Tajik education: deterioration of the quality of education; a need for a change of "mentality" among teachers, students and educational administrators; inequitable access to school; inadequate management capacity; insufficient funding; unsatisfactory school facilities; and a serious shortage of textbooks. Administratively, the post-Soviet Tajik education system has changed very little from its Soviet predecessor.

Almost all schools in Tajikistan continue to be public. The dominant approaches to educational reform, including teacher development, have remained mainly top-down, bureaucratic and largely rhetorical. One of the major phrases used in education circles is "changing the mentality of the teachers so that they can teach according to new realities"(personal communication at the official structures between April and December 1999, also in World Bank, 1999). Changing the mentality of education personnel may be a necessity for building a democratic post-Soviet Tajik society.[6] But emphasising training and a focus on teachers' mentality as the

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[6] In fact the WB document (1999) mentions the importance of mentality change for market economy and democracy and suggest the necessity of this mentality change for all education stakeholders, not only teachers.

prime "object of change" tends to demean teachers, consider their knowledge as a "problem and obstacle to improvement", creates ground for manipulating and controlling them and essentially repeats the old and failed approach to educational reform (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Farrell, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Thiessen, 1993).

While in MBAP, the education system has been assisted by international organisations, especially the Aga Khan Development Network, and has continued to operate (Kuder, 1996[7]), the challenges remain enormous and the general educational situation continues to be deteriorating. The current educational establishment has been increasingly unable to sustain the expensive infrastructure, let alone improve it.

In 1999, there were 315 schools enrolling 55 thousand students in MBAP. Out of 315 schools, 89 are primary (grades 1-4), 66 middle school, (grades 1-9), and 160 complete secondary schools (grades 1-11). Since 1991, almost all schools in MBAP have been streamed into natural-mathematical science, social science and general streams. The general stream accepts the students who cannot meet the criteria for joining either of the other two. There are around 6500 teachers in the province, the majority of whom obtained their schooling and higher education during the Soviet period, previous to 1992 (Kuder, 1996). Since 1993, however, the number of teachers leaving teaching has steadily increased. Unofficial figures obtained from the MBAP Department of Education suggest that in 1999 about 120 and in 2000 about 70 qualified teachers left the profession in the province (e-mail communication, December 2000). To compensate for this loss, the schools hire their own graduates who have no further qualifications than school graduation. The teachers and students continue using the old Soviet textbooks. There are no laboratory facilities for teaching science in most of the schools.

Part of the reform efforts attempts to re-invigorate the system structurally and intellectually. Parent-teacher associations (PTA) have been revived to take charge of several school activities,

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[7] An internal report for the Aga Khan Foundation (available from the Foundation, Dushanbe, Tajikistan and Geneva, Switzerland).

such as renovation, budgeting, and attendance. Fee-paying classes are being opened in each school. In addition, schools and PTAs have initiated complementary fundraising activities, such as selling the school gardens' agricultural products, opening of school revolving funds, seeking sponsors, and selling teaching materials.

On the intellectual side, the transition from one level to another (i.e., from primary to secondary and from secondary to higher secondary) is no longer taken for granted, but depends on a rigorous examination. Students are streamed into natural-mathematical science, social science and general groups right after the primary level examination (i.e., grade 4). Schools and teachers now undergo an accreditation process to ensure that certain standards are met.

The majority of the reform efforts in Tajikistan and MBAP lack grounding in research and empirical data. They are largely based on the policy-makers' and bureaucrats' views about what is good for education, the students, and the country. Many of the efforts are attempts to revive the so-called "successful" Soviet approaches. Others are a simple imitation or modification of similar efforts of other former Soviet countries, particularly those of the Russian Federation. The designers of the reform efforts have largely ignored the voices of the teachers, the ultimate providers and reform implementers of education—and the voices of people at the grassroots level—the ultimate beneficiaries.

It is against this problematic contextual background that my study was carried out. This inquiry has brought to the foreground the voices of highly committed and deeply knowledgeable teachers and other close stakeholders to be heard in the current debate in educational and societal reform.

The study's design: A combination of qualitative case study and life history

Qualitative case study

Socio-historical qualitative research stresses that any phenomenon, including teaching, has meaning only within a context, which illuminates its history, development, main relationships,

underlying assumptions, current location and future trends (Merriam, 1988).

I used case studies, because case study is "the most appropriate format" for school-based research and is "the most memorable and meaningful" endeavor to teachers (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). It focuses on the exploration of a phenomenon (i.e., case), without experimenting upon it, and with little worries about the techniques used for data collection (Stake, 1994). It tries to retain the meaningful, holistic characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 1994, p. 14) and their relations over a defined period of time (Merriam, 1988).

Fitting case study design, my research was bounded in space (rural, mountainous), time (focus on post-Soviet), population (teachers), focus (interaction of practices, beliefs and context), and scale (general secondary school).[8] It is also interpretive, as I intensively and continuously involved myself with the participants and their culture, and partook in their daily life and work for a prolonged time (Merriam, 1988). In addition, my research focused on socio-cultural context, time and space, thus becoming "more than an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a social unit or phenomenon. It is a socio-cultural analysis of the unit of study. Concerns with the cultural context are what set this type of study apart" (Merriam, 1988, p. 23). Furthermore, this study aimed at producing valuable stories focused on the cases' complexities relations, issues and arguments, which I then analyzed using inductive-deductive approach.

Life history

Life history, as a method of exploring human experience (Smith, 1994), as influenced by personal, institutional and social histories (Cole, 1994, p. 3). As such, it provided several advantages for my study. First, it helped to explain the meanings that underlie the participants' actions and behaviours (Sparkes, 1994, p. 178; Woods, 1987). Second, life history places and examines a lived experience within a greater socio-economic, cultural, historical and political

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[8] General secondary schools in Tajikistan, as in other parts of the former Soviet Union, aim to provide a complete, general secondary education. In these schools, the levels of schooling [primary (grades 1-4), lower secondary (grades 5-9) and higher secondary (grades 10-11)] –exists under the same organisational structure (for more on the types of schools, see Popovych & Stankevich, 1992, Webber, 2000).

sphere. To this point, Goodson and Cole (1994) noted that the whole idea of looking at teachers as change agents, transformative intellectuals and empowerers of themselves and others, as mentioned in the previous chapter, will not yield results if we ignore the micro-political and contextual realities of school life. "In other words, teacher development in its broadest sense depends on teachers having access to professional knowledge beyond just the personal, practical and pedagogical" (Goodson & Cole, 1994, p. 103). Third, life history, aiming at socio-historical, cultural and contextual exploration of human experience, gives prominence to teachers' voices and concerns, which in turn provide insights not only about teachers' classroom practices but also about their roles, positions and status with regards to power-knowledge relations within educational and societal hierarchies (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Fourth, the life history approach enables one to conceptualize teachers' practices in a much broader sense than just as behaviors and actions exhibited in the classroom. Practice, says Goodson (1996), "is a good deal more than the technical things we do in the classroom--it relates to who we are, to our whole approach to life"(p. 29). Finally, life history, due to its concern with whole persons and their relationships with their social contexts and histories, counters the ethical and intellectual limitations of one-shot, quick visit research in which the researchers take what they need from their subjects, give nothing in response, and make sweeping generalizations on the basis of thin, superficial data (Lather, 1986; Goodson, 1997). However, within life history, prioritizing and respecting teachers' voices does not mean a blind acceptance of what they say (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996); it involves a respectful dialogue:

> Voices are not only heard, but also engaged, reconciled and argued with. It is important to not only attend to the *aesthetics* of articulating teachers' voices but also to the *ethics* of what those voices articulate (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 62, emphasis mine, see also Sparkes, 1994, p. 165-166).

The study's participants

The study's participants included core participants of five teachers in three sites of the Badakhshan province of Tajikistan. The criteria for selecting the core participants included the

followings: They needed to:

(1) have teaching experience that captured both Soviet and post- Soviet times;

(2) be reform minded, trying to improve their practices irrespectful of the difficulties;

(3) represent linguistic, religious, ethnic, subject and gender diversity; and

(4) be vocal, respected members of the schools and community;

In addition to the core participants, in each of the three sites I met with focus group of teachers (12 teachers in each site, 36 altogether), parents, and community and government representatives. I also consulted officials at the Boards and Ministry of Education and consultants in the foreign NGOs. No particular criteria were employed in collecting data from these participants. The data collection tools included observation, interviews, field notes, and document analysis. A multi-level qualitative data description, analysis and interpretation were employed to extract meaning, themes, patterns and categories, interpret and draw tentative conclusions.

Findings and Discussion: Challenging the promises of the collapse of the Soviet Union and exposing its rhetoric

Sorting out the ideological and political confusion

While globalization has affected teachers' life and work contradictorily, these effects have largely been negative. The changes launched by Perestroika and Glasnost (mid-1980s) ended unexpectedly with the Soviet collapse. Globalization and its major event—the Soviet collapse largely betrayed their promises. Instead of bringing peace and independence, the Soviet collapse resulted in the civil war and large-scale dislocations. A teacher expressed his feelings about this as follows:

When I saw thousands of women with their babies walking in the cold December

for tens and hundreds of kilometers[9], I cried and felt something really unforgivable was happening. I realized that those who broke up the Soviet Union were not good people if they had allowed all this to happen (Niyozov 2001, pp 137-138).

This, in turn, led to the rise of the tribalism and nationalism and painful severance of the ties and relationships. A teacher put it as follows:

> We as teachers did not appreciate any of this: the collapse of the USSR, the independence of Tajikistan, and the civil war. Neither did we like the departure of the Russians, nor the division of the school into Tajik and Kyrgyz (Niyozov, 2001, p.128).

In addition to the revival of the local and regional agendas, the arrival of the new meta-narratives was another complicating factor. The rapid and aggressive advance of Islam encountered not only the subtle neo-liberalism of the market economy, but also the pending socialist ideology. The teachers, in order to continue teaching the good ethics, had to find not only differences between the various ideologies, but also their similarities.

> During Perestroika and Independence I was a bit worried about the excess of talk about Islam, but then I realised that the major principles of the "code of the constructor of communism"[10] are similar to those of *Javonmardi*[11] (chivalry) in Islam. The problem is how to apply them in practice. I don't see that happening with either of them (Niyozov, 2001, p. 262)

Another irony was that despite the collapse of the Soviet Union with its repressive

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[9] The teachers referred to the civil war events in 1992-1993, when thousands of the people of the Pamirian and Qarategin origins left their homes in Dushanbe and moved towards the East. The major exodus of the population happened in December 1992 and January 1993. The distance from Dushanbe to Khorog is about 525kilometers.

[10] Code of ethics of the constructor of communism was a document regulating the principles upon which the ethics and behaviours of the Soviet citizen communist were to be grounded (see Long & Long, 1999).

[11] The teachers referred to parts of the book *Pandiyati Jawonmardi* (Messages of Chivalry), (Ivanow, 1953).

ideological status apparatus, and regardless of the globalization, the promise of the freedom of expression was not realized:

> In this place (Murghab- a site of the study[12]) any voice that calls for change is seen as a sign of rebellion…They (the official structures) can accuse you of instigating interethnic conflict and call you a terrorist.[13] They have put a few people in jail last year because of their criticism of the Government (Niyozov, 2001, p. 123).

Breakdown of the Soviet infrastructure and return of the natural challenges

The collapse of the USSR rather resulted in the breakdown of the existing structures, which used to provide some basic services.

> In the Soviet Union we had food, clothes. We did not spend days looking for food. The queues were after posh clothes and goods, not the basics. Here in the village, there were no queues. I feel sorry about the Soviet collapse. Because we were not grateful, we even lost the basics. I think this democracy has so far been no match to that (Int.1: 40, emphasis mine).

One of these losses was the disappearance of heating- something essential for school functioning in the province.

> You came to the site at the right time: we still have a bit of warm weather; the periods are regular; we feel comfortable and can show our best. I had some ideas and wanted you to see them and tell me how they looked and how they could be improved. Otherwise what can you do in 25 minutes when classrooms are freezing, kids are shivering and unable to hold pens? (Niyozov, 2001, p. 129).
>
> Cold weather, coupled with the lack of heating and students' malnutrition led to the

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[12] The study was carried in three sites of the province. In addition to Murghab the two others were Shugnan and Wanj.

[13] The participant refers here to the larger context. It was a time when Russian forces invaded Chechnya on the charge of terrorism and Western countries searched for Osama ben Laden, who was hiding in neighbouring Afghanistan. The Russian, Kyrgyz and Uzbek media called Muslim guerrillas terrorists (for more discussion see *ICG Asia Report*, 2001; Sagdeev & Eisenhower, 1995).

reduction of the instructional time. This intensified teachers' work and made any learning deeply doubtful:

> What can you teach when a lesson is reduced to 25 minutes? What can you teach when children are shivering and cannot hold their pens? In March, it is still 20 degrees below zero here. From April till May we move very fast. We have to finish the textbook. Thus, we often teach two topics in a lesson. *What kind of learning can there be in such a cases*?(Int. 2: 45, emphasis mine).

Another teacher suggested that teaching in the cold classes was not only an intellectual waste but also harmful to the students' health:

> I don't know if the students are learning anything. But as biology teacher I believe that, if things go this way, these children are all going to have chronic disease for the rest of their lives. They are going to be useless in terms of health (Int. 5: 65).

As the schools began to shut their doors for considerable time spans, the teachers were undergoing emotional upheavals:

> In 1992-1993 academic year, for the first time in my life that school was closed for the winter because of lack of heating. Winter here is about 7-8 months. I missed teaching so much…Even during the Great Patriotic War[14] the schools were not closed… (Niyozov, 2001, p. 138)… In the Soviet times they used to bring 150 tons of good coal. Last year (1998) they brought 11 tons of rubbish (Niyozov, 2001, p. 178).

Increase of professional challenges and decrease of support

In addition to the above-mentioned political and natural difficulties, there was a great

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[14] The war in the territories of the USSR lasted for 4 years and claimed the lives of more than 25 million Soviet people. Tajiks fought against Nazi Germany alongside other Soviet citizens.

number of professional challenges that the teachers encountered as a result of the collapse. One of such challenges included the lack of material support and intellectual guidance in the face of increasing demands and pressures. The following voice vividly revealed what Hargreaves called as intensification[15] of teacher's work:

> The time and the program have changed, but there are no new textbooks. The books in the libraries are not only insufficient, but also contradictory to the way we are supposed to teach now. Physical and mental work and pressure on teachers have increased several times. Two days before the classes I get worried about how am I going to teach "Human Being and Society", what am I going to teach and whether I am not misguiding the students. How could I use words and concepts that are not shallow but useful and connected to the topic? They [policy makers] have taken care of the programs but not about whether teachers are prepared to teach them: no courses, no books (Int. 1: 48-49).

For a female history teacher the challenge of reconstructing truth amidst confusing agendas, and lack of support to handle this challenge was a pain to live on daily basis:

> You have to be a teacher of history to understand how scared I am to say something now. Once I talked about Tajikistan being socialist; now we criticize that past. Once we talked against religion, capitalism, and private ownership; now we are in favour of all of them. Once I said Uzbeks were our brothers; now people talk of them as occupiers of Samarqand and Bokhara. If I talk today about Russians as brothers and

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[15] Intensification is a concept drawn from theories of labour process (Larson, 1980). Hargreaves (1994) describes some of its components: a sharp reduction of time for relaxation and recreation during the working day, and retooling, relearning new skills, and keeping updated. It also creates chronic overload, which reduces the possibility for reflection, inhibits control and involvement over long-term planning, and fosters dependency on externally produced materials and expertise. Sprague (1992) sees intensification as politically constructed and aimed at eroding teacher's working conditions and expertise, ultimately leading to deprofessionalisation, reduction of the quality of teaching and erosion of status (see also Hargreaves, 1994).

friends, the youth of the village and my students do not like it[16]. I do not want to be a liar again, because of someone else's mistakes. How can I talk about Samarqand and Bokhara so as to avoid a conflict between Tajiks and Uzbeks?[17] Our scholars think only about their interests and not the children and society. How can I state that we have a law-abiding, democratic and secular society, when there are drugs, corruption and nepotism? When one leader claims that it is he who has brought the humanitarian supplies here? When another leader is not afraid to talk as if he were the Aga Khan? When a third one tries to force us to pray? After all these, I have no trust in all these new ideas (Int. 1: 90).

Another teacher voiced against the post-Soviet privatization and streaming of the students. In her view this resulted in disempowering the students, in particular the poor:

I agree that the lyceum and profiling help the gifted students get ahead. But why are we worried about the gifted ones and not worried about the weaker ones? I get more worried about those students that are left behind. There are parents who told me similar things. They say that their children are going to end up slaves to those who study in the fee-paying classes. They say that their children are doomed to become no more than drivers and herders. I myself ended regular school with excellent marks in all the subjects. I have talked about this, but no one listens to me (Int. 1:132).

This was against the ethical essence of teaching. Teaching for them meant being able to

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[16] This view is based on the clashes between the Russian military and the youth of the village. While the military justifies its positions and posts by curbing the cross-border trafficking, the youth blame them for unsubstantiated harassment, restricting on freedom and killings. For example, many of the villagers, not only the youth, alleged that Russians border guards were involved in the death of the four young men from the village during my field work.

[17] I know of no policy that encourages teachers to instigate conflict between Tajiks and Uzbeks. The teacher's concerns rather arise from popular media viewpoints particularly as expressed at the time of the Samanid celebrations.

make a difference in the students' lives, helping someone to stand on one's feet and move. A colleague of her revealed this notion of teaching as follows:

> I quickly realized that good teaching was essentially about the weak ones. The gifted and strong students need you for some guidance and recognition. The weak ones need you every time. They come from poor families, lag behind, and are shy to talk (Int.1: 132).

Another disturbing post- Soviet reality was the decline of the status of social and ethical sciences as the "free- market" emphasized money and skill and job-oriented subjects defined narrowly.

> Many of our students do not understand biology, a subject of their own body, let alone history. They do not pay attention to the other subjects, though these are on the timetable. When a student tells me *we do not need history and you better just give me a five, it is like a knife in my heart.* They charge that with studying history our children "won't go further than the airport."[18] Everyone wants to study English. But as they reach grade 11, they ask for consultations on history. I openly say that now I cannot guarantee their strong knowledge of history. Some study one stream here and join another stream at university. They create problems for the instructors, for themselves and their own parents (Int.1: 5, emphasis mine).

Socio-economic challenges

The teachers also faced the contradictions and challenges brought by free market economy. It seems that free market justified the means that were often unethical and contrary to what the teachers believed in and preached. Having encountered the tensions between the ethics of teaching and the reality of success in the market economy they relied on their culture and traditions to

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[18] A local proverb, meaning that you won't go far and won't achieve much.

respond:

> I am afraid that the students may ask me one day whether I have prepared them for this world or the other one? I do not know about market economy a lot. But I can see is that there are no regulations. To become rich everyone does what he wants. Unlike the Soviet times, there is no accountability. *But I cannot tell these students to cheat, steal, kill or sell drugs.* The values that I talk about never die and never get old. I hope we are going to have a country where there is law and which is also blessed by *Mawlo.*[19]*The key to this is preparing people with ethics and knowledge.* That is what the Imam tells us now and that is what the Communists told us before. The issue is to put all this into practice. Not just talk about them (Int. 5: 23).

The spread of dugs and guns as result of the post-Soviet chaos was another unexpected force. The teachers found themselves armless to teach good ethics and behaviours in a time when success was equated with the material gains to be achieved quickly, often without hard work and without accountability for the outcomes of one's action:

> It is hard to explain to children that drugs and guns are temporary. The boys reply that these activities provide food, clothes, jobs, cars and even better education than the school. With dollars in hand, they can hire tutors, buy diplomas of whatever specialty you want. There are homes with five to seven cars, and some of them are foreign-made. Students also reject our assertions that the success of the Narcomafia and guerrillas are short-lived. The guerrillas are receiving high positions in the current government[20] (Int. 1: 71).

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[19] A term refers to the Imams in the Ismaili interpretation of Islam (e.g., Imam Aly, the Aga Khan).

[20] The teacher referred to the peace treaty between the United Tajik Opposition and the Government in 1997, according to which a great share of the position went to the Opposition and were occupied by guerrilla commanders (see Chapter 4).

While drugs and guns were post-Soviet phenomena, corruption and nepotism were a continuity from the Soviet times (e.g., Simis, 1982). They reduced schooling into a farce to simply pass through. They rendered hard work and honesty meaningless. Their effects were similarly debilitating.

> It is terrible. Imagine a poor child prepares himself all life, works day and night. Then someone else who had enjoyed all life gets to the university by giving a bribe or using a connection. I have developed hatred for those who do all this. I feel humiliated and slapped in face. I just wonder how patient people we are. I know which of my students is capable of what. When you see your good student has failed you curse the Earth and the sky. I pray that the Imam (Aga Khan) saves us from this at the new university (Int.1: 58-59).

Effects on the teachers, teachers' reaction and coping

The above challenges have had deep effects upon the teachers and their students. For many of them to live ethically and morally in the post-Soviet times was to fail in life. One of these effects was their demoralization. A teacher put it bluntly:

> Even though I am very busy with handling my survival needs, I could still find time and energy to put into teaching. I could daily put 3-4 hours into preparation for teaching. But why? Who needs my teaching? When positions are bribed and diplomas are bought? When the school authorities say to the students and teachers: "If you do not want to come to school, to the devil with you." When there is misuse of the school's property. When the sons of the leaders of the village stop their peers from coming to the school. When some people at the *rayono*[21] say they don't care whether our children get education (Int. 5: 98). (p. 371).

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[21] A Russian word, means District Education Board.

Understandably many lowered their academic expectations. Instead they increased the caring aspect of the work, the sense of being together and not giving up to the harsh realities. A teacher put this as follows:

> No serious learning can take place without high demands and expectations. I cannot demand this if the children are hungry and unclothed. I would rather say thanks to these children and even arrange food for them for merely coming to school. In my school years, for 20 kopeks[22] we had pirog[23], tea and palow.[24] We have this saying "from a hunger you kill a tiger." You can patch your clothes, but you cannot patch your stomach. Here we do not have even grass so that we could eat it and fill our stomachs. I often fight with my dad: why did you come to this hell? So I give the children 4 and 5[25] merely for coming to school. I am telling you this because I lived in the two periods. I always remember Brezhnev's words: "If there is bread there will be song"[26](Niyozov, 2001, p. 122).

A teacher, who is now working in a local café, felt guilty for leaving the profession he loved and continued to miss.

> I have been teaching the children not to give up when facing difficulties, and I have given up first. It is much better to teach the young students than to listen to the drunken clients of the café, who make me feel ashamed of having been their teacher for sometime. If there was a salary of at least 40, 000 Tajik rubles in the school I would return"(FN.2: 34)… In the café he earned 45, 000 Tajik rubles per month

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[22] *Kopek* was the smallest Soviet monetary unit. 100 kopeks made one ruble. 20 kopeks in the seventies would have been equal to CDN 40 cents. The average salary of teachers in Murghab was 75% more than the salary of the teachers who lived on the altitude below 2000 meters. The factor of high altitude was remunerated with a handsome addition to the teachers' salaries, and earlier retirement age.

[23] *Pirog* is a Russian term and stands for a pie-dumpling with meat or potato with onion.

[24] *Palow* is a Tajik term, stands for a type of food that is a combination of rice, carrot and meat. It resembles *biryani* in Indian cuisine.

[25] In Soviet education a five-scale assessment procedure was used. 5 was equal to A an 4 to B, 3 to C and 2 and 1 to F.

[26] "If there is bread there will be song" was the opening sentence of Brezhnev's book "Virgin Land." It was compulsory reading for schoolteachers and University students.

(Niyozov, 2001, p. 83).

For some, it was the anger over their powerlessness and the lack of material and moral support and acknowledgement of their sacrifices that was hurting:

> When a lesson goes like this (i.e., when students are not ready at all for the lesson, when they have not done their homework), I get tired and nervous. The lesson becomes a burden. *I wonder whether I should go on with it or go out to look for wood.* I become rude because conditions make me get out of control (Int. 2:38)…*My wife makes me angrier when, she, instead of appreciating my struggle, also curses me: why do you kill yourself when no one cares about you and your family? I feel she is (p. 169).*

A female teacher in a focus-group meeting expressed how have the hardships of life and work at home and school, added with the powerlessness have declined their self-esteem:

> Female teachers in the mountains are *beiloj*[27](deprived of solutions and choices, disempowered). All our life goes in serving others: my six children, husband, old parents, guests and cattle. When we watch the lives of the women in the West we feel guilty for being born and living here. *It is as if we are punished by God to be born here. What have we been punished for? We cannot move out of here. The only way to end all this is to die. Even doing a small job, such as preparing tea makes you go through hell,* because every thing is in short supply and very expensive. We get panicked every time we have to do even a small thing (Int. 1: 71, emphasis mine).

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[27] *Beiloj* literally means "powerless", a person who is desperate and has no solution at hand.

Not every one could bear this misery. Many teachers departed from profession and country. These decisions have not been easy to make. For some, this departure appears to have happened with tearful eyes and scratched hearts. A teacher who forced her husband to leave, justified it as follows:

> We were supporting the school head and committed to the school. But I forced him (her husband – also a teacher to go], because I could not bear this poverty any more. Due to cold and other concerns I have developed a kidney problem and each year I go for treatment to hospital. Unlike the Soviet times, you have to pay for needles, for medicine, and care. There I realised that the hospital staff has a much better life than we teachers do, though the government shouts that teachers get more salary than doctors.[28]Another reason was my son. On the *Roozi Noor* (Day of Light)[29] in 1997, he refused to attend the festival, because of not having good clothes in comparison to his peers. People here would rather be hungry, but well dressed. My son said, what is the benefit of my parents for me, when the children of the businessmen and even unemployed dress better than I do. I cried and felt if we do not do something for him, he may get into drugs so as to have clothes similar to his friends. He is a university student, while many of his friends are not. I forced Sher (her husband) to leave the school. He cried when he left the school (Int. 1: 62, emphasis mine).

The departure of the above teacher's husband's improved their life he joined an NGO and was earning 15 times more than his wife. However, for many teachers this departure has not always ended in a positive outcome. In fact it has often been further demoralizing.

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[28] The teacher referred to the practices of paying for everything in the hospital, though not legal, which effectively increased doctors' incomes higher than teachers'.

[29] *Roozi Noor,* Day of Light, was the day when the Aga Khan arrived in MBAP for the first time; it is now celebrated as one of the holy days across the Ismaili areas of MBAP.

> There is a difference between leaving one's job and being forced to leave the job. How long can you work with 6000 Tajik rubles. Even that you do not get for months. Many other good teachers left their job because of their own children. Some have left because there was no support, no appreciation. It is hard to both find a new job and re-adjust to that job. For many teachers, to work like slaves in Russia[30], to sell soap and clothes, gum and sunflower seeds in the bazaar is putting themselves down. It is humiliating for both those who have quit and those who remained in teaching (Int. 1: 67).

For another teacher the whole post-Soviet dependency was humiliating. It is amazing how incisively she reveals the implications of the external aid. Her personal feeling speaks to global experience and agenda:

> I eat this humanitarian food, wear these clothes and am worried. Why is it all so free? Is this really without any conditions? How are we going to pay it back? What is going to happen to our country? What is wrong with us that we do nothing and every thing is brought to us freely? I do not enjoy all this for such long time. I feel pity for the people around eating all this without a feeling of shame (Int. 1: 67).

Moments of hope amidst despair

As any social phenomenon, globalization and the related Soviet collapse were not completely negative phenomena. The revival of the local cultural traditions embedded in the Ismaili Islam was seen as a positive aspect. Added with the first-ever arrival of the community's spiritual leader, it inspired the whole community, proving hope and meaning to the teachers' work. This belief enabled them to endure the hardships, make sacrifices, and rethink teaching as service,

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[30] The participant referred to the departure of thousands of people from MBAP and Tajikistan, including teachers to Russia, wherein they worked as cheap labour in Russian factories, firms and stores.

grounded in a deep spirituality. A schoolhead put it as follows:

> Prior to the Imam's arrival, we had not received our salaries for three years. After his visit we decided to work for the sake of Mawlo[31] and his steps in Badakhshan. What was the use of the nonsense salary that we got? Mawlo sent us everything, food, clothes, and fuel, his love and care. He said we were always in his thoughts and heart. How could we not reply with something adequate, I asked the teachers. The only thing Mawlo wanted of us is to work hard, seek knowledge and teach the children[32] (FN. 1: 12, emphasis mine).

In one of his speeches in Badakhshan, the Aga Khan's encouraged his community members not to fall prey to the changes, but be proactive and take up the challenges of change with courage.

> We have a long tradition of intellectual search in our *Jamat.*[33] We must not fear, therefore, the changing environment around us, but we must educate ourselves and our children, so that they understand the changes that will occur, and can properly prepare for them, and can *make those changes serve you*, the people amongst whom you live and future generations (Aga Khan IV, Badakhshan, At Khorog State University, May 1995, found in Keshavjee, 1998, p. 61, emphasis mine).

This added to the people's motivation. In one of the sites, the head of the Education Board

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[31] *Mawlo* from Arabic *Mawla*, is a synonym for Imam in this text. The participants used terms such as Imam, Hozir Imom, and Mawlo interchangeably for the Aga Khan.

[32] The head of the school here refers to the *farmans* of the Aga Khan made duing his usually mass meetings with the members of his community. The major source of this information is the Aga Khan's *farmans* and *irshads* in Badakhshan. *Farmans and irshads* (literally guidance or order)are major priviate instruments of the Aga Khan for guiding the Ismialis. They are defined by the 1986 Ismiali Constitution as any "pronouncement, direction, order or ruling given by the Imam [the Aga Khan]" (Aga Khan, 1987, p. 7, quoted in Keshavjee, 1998, p. 47). Farmans and irshads can pertain to both the secular and religious concerns of Ismailis. Acoodring to the current 1986 Ismali Constitution, "[b]y virtue of his office and in accordance with the faith and belief of the Ismaili Muslims, the Imam enjoys full authority of governance over and in respect of all religious and Jammati matters of the Ismaili Muslims" (Aga Khan 1987, p. 5). I witnessed several of the farmans and irshads as a member of the audience and on some occaisons acted as the oficial translator of the farmans and irshads from English to Tajik.

[33] *Jamat* stands for the community and congregation.

mentioned that he had never noticed such unpredictable children's motivation in a time when the opportunities and conditions have diminished.

> In the Soviet era we could hardly motivate the children, despite the good conditions available for teaching and learning. At the end of the Soviet times, very few students wanted to continue their studies after school. The majority liked to become drivers and salespersons. Now we have a hard time to catch up with their motivation and expectations. *I wish we had those conditions and this motivation.* Before, children hated many of their teachers. *Today they care for their teachers. They say teachers are bechora (powerless). They are ready to help them at home, provide them with wood, and give them clothes as gifts on official occasions, so that the teachers come and teach.* Children visit their teachers, in case where these miss their lessons, ask about their health and when they will come to the next class (Niyozov, 2001, pp. 222-223).

The teachers however also revealed that while the spiritual leader's (i.e., Aga Khan's) care for them and their own devotion and spiritual love to their Imam were unconditional, there were malpractices and misuse of this relationship, as well as manipulation of their devotions and commitment by some of those who were in the position of power and privilege. A teacher pointed out that although he separates the personality and vision of the Aga Khan from the malpractices that have been taking place in his name, he is nevertheless worried:

> I tend to agree with the *khalifa*[34] that only the Imam can resolve the corruption problem, that only he can remove these people and bring justice. What the people in the cafe[35] said about the government and Masali[36] makes me worried that these

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[34] *Khalifa* is a religious authority in the Ismaili traditions of Badakhshan.
[35] The teacher referred to the café Friendship, where we would have our usual chats over *mantu* (a local fat food) and would often overhear those who could afford vodka gossip about the state of things in the village, province and country.
[36] Pseudonym for a local senior officer at a NGO who was mentioned to have earlier worked as a Komsomol officer.

people may do harm to the Imam's image here (Int. 2: 74).

Denouncing the narrow meaning of teaching

While the teachers may have not been fully conscious of the free-market's drive to reduce the role of teaching to technical rationality (Giroux 1988), and economy oriented vocationalism (see Stromquist & Monkman, 2000), they voiced against this narrowing of the role of teacher and the meaning of education. First, the teachers manifested this position by highlighting the importance of their role, regardless of the decline of the teachers' status in the society and regardless of the crisis of ethics. A teacher pointed out that the prosperous future of Badakhshan will acknowledge their contribution:

> Teachers are a source of spirituality, culture, education and the future of the society. We work because of the Imam's (meaning the Aga Khan's) help and care for us. We work so that the children live better than we do and our community does not fall back to the level of our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. In 70 years of the Soviet rule we have moved so much ahead and we do not want our people to become ignorant again. Both the prosperity of the society and its backwardness are our concerns (FN. 1: 13).

Building on the cultural traditions and personal experience, these teachers resisted the free-market's drive to reduce teaching into a skill-oriented exercise. For them teaching has had a broader notion:

> I want my students to be ethical and knowledgeable. To care for others and not be selfish, to respect each other and not only their elders. I also want them to be hard working, because nothing, including grades, comes to one without hard work. I want them to get useful professions. I want my students to avoid bad habits such as smoking, drug addiction, and drinking. For me these are more important and harder to achieve than teaching Russian or Maths. We have a saying that you know: *Olim*

shudan oson wa odam shudan shudan mushkil (It is easy to become a scholar, but it is much harder to become a human being—Niyozov, 2001, pp. 147-48).

For some teachers teaching remained a responsibility they believed no one else could undertake. It was hard to avoid this responsibility in the rural context where the interactions were intensive and family and community-oriented. It was immoral to refuse the fulfillment of their vocation call. A woman teacher put it as follows:

> When I look at children my heart gets broken. They had nothing to do with the collapse of the USSR. Like the teachers, they too were innocent victims of the events. Their childhood was even more disturbed. Unlike our times, many of these children have not seen sweets and toys. *What sort of a heart one should have to not attend the school*? (Niyozov, 2001, p. 222).

In the time of the rise of tribalism. ethnic nationalism and territorial disputes, the teachers continued working for an international and peaceful society where diversity is celebrated. A Russian teacher put it as follows:

> I should be pushing a humanistic ideology. You noticed how many nationalities and ethnicities we have got here in Murghab. Murghab is not Darvaz or Shugnan where one ethnicity lives. We should make it a tradition to celebrate the days of each ethnicity here. One day for Wakhan, the other for Roshan and so on. Another day we should have a Kyrgyz cultural event. I should promote education that teaches respect, justice and internationalism. By internationalism I mean the equality of people despite their geographical locations, languages, races, and religions. I like when there is pluralism of thinking, instead of having an ideology of a party or a clan (Int. 2: 68).

Another teacher believed that as time goes the current information blockage in Badakhshan should break. This will help her students to get alternative perspectives to what they are taught in the schools.

> The good thing about this new era is that we cannot stop information and people coming and going. My students will face new possibilities and explanations as t from coming and going. If the powerful Soviet Union could not do that, how can poor Tajikistan do so? (Int. 1: 55).

Another glimpse of this hope was expressed by a teacher-participant of a workshop arranged by the Badakhshan education department on innovative practices in education reform in December 1999:

> From the meeting and from the issues raised by the Government inspectors and the guests from the Aga Khan Foundation I got a good feeling: There are people who talk seriously and are concerned about the educational improvement in Pamir. My only hope now is that all this has to be put into practice (Interview, case 1, p. 133).

Another teacher suggested that although it would take long to fight against the crisis of ethics in the society, it was worth fighting for:

> It will take time when the number of the ethical and responsible people becomes larger than those corrupted. I believe that good is going to win. The current victory of bad is temporary. Victory may not come in one form only. We may not win materially and physically, but we can do so morally. We can cause a deep psychological blow to the bad, make it feel ashamed and put down (Int. 2: 62, emphasis mine).

Teachers as partners of social and educational reform

The extension of the education's broader notion was expressed by the participants perspectives on the societal and educational reform. First, the teachers revealed the contradictions of the rhetoric and reality of educational reform and decentralization in particular. The following teacher's voice illuminates that despite of the decentralization's promise for improving relevance and localizing decision making, the provided education was still of a little relevance.

> During the Soviet times we learnt about USA, Russia and the Roman Empire, which were too far and too old. But we knew nearly nothing about our neighbour Afghanistan. Ultimately, we have come to teach our Tajik history. But, because our scholars cared so little, we have so many problems with teaching it now… The current programs are being developed in Dushanbe and sent down to us. Many important themes are not in the program: We have got so many problems, the origins of which go deep down in history… We have several small ethnic groups and languages here in Badakhshan, which have little respect for and understanding of each other. We need to know about ourselves before knowing others. Why are there so many languages here? I would talk about our economic and political life. Why are we despite our high level of education so poor? Why did we follow blindly our populist leaders? I have nothing against the Soghdians and the Bactrians[37], but I want to know about ourselves first and how are we connected to them. I would include the view of mountains, the traditions of the people of Badakhshan, the needs of Badakhshan and the problems we face today. So many countries wanted to occupy our land, so many people want to come here and we know very little about it. Many people did not even know about how our people are divided between Tajikistan and Afghanistan (Niyozov, 2001, p. 233).

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[37] Soghdians and Bactrians: peoples of the area in the days of classical era Persian Empire. Soghdians and Bactrians are seen as predecessors of the current Tajiks.

Not only the centralized approach to curriculum continued. Indeed decentralization appeared to be a trick by which the educational authorities seem to have discarded their obligations to help the teachers in the face of increasing professional and personal challenges: The same history teacher added:

> Yesterday I taught two topics in one hour. That is useless, taking into consideration the age of the students. The program has remained the same while the hours are decreased considerably. More time is given to other subjects such as English and subjects newly introduced into the school program.[38] The higher authorities, when they send the program, don't care that we close school due to cold weather. Even more, the Ministry has developed a program for the grades 10 and 11 that we teachers are not ready to teach. For example, I do not know where the Sumerian state is located. How can I teach that to the students? The program demands that, by grade 9, students should finish the topics including Perestroika, because compulsory schooling ends. Children can learn all this only kur kurona (blindly blind, i.e., by rote memorization). These people have not given us textbooks and have not considered the psychological state of the children. Neither do they care that we here study in a second language. They came here and told us to do musht-jam'(to pull the five fingers together, to make a feast)--to put several topics together and also teach them well. If that person was in a classroom, he would have understood what it means to teach too much in such a short time. By not supplying the textbooks, they have also left the job of developing programs also to the teachers. When I do not have any material for the topic and I come to class unprepared, I feel guilty and lose sleep at night. You can't do so that all the time. The representatives from the

[38] In an education seminar I conducted in Dushanbe, teachers considered the idea of introducing too many subjects as confusing for the students and creating overload for the teachers. One senior education officer expressed this as follows: "The head of a child is like balloon. If you blow too much it will burst."

> Institute of Upgrading Teacher Qualifications and Education Board say they do agree with us that it is impossible to fulfil the program. But they do not convey this message to the higher authorities. I have thought many times to write to Ministry about this, yet I do not have the time. I also do not write because I think they won't listen to me (Int. 1: 34-35, emphasis mine).

A veteran teacher who has outlived several reform activities during Soviet times illustrated how assumptious some of the outside-in approaches to educational reform were. For him, the reformers' so-called new ideas were nothing more than well- forgotten and often rejected good old ideas:

> Some of the foreigners with their translators assume that their ideas are absolutely new and make conclusions about the existing system. Last year in a workshop, we were told that the Soviet system was scholastic, abstract and did not develop the students' thinking. I wonder which book they have taken this from and who has told them this. I also feel as if some of the translators either do not understand what we say, or do not convey our ideas well. I have been using this problem- posing teaching for the last 30 years.

Aftermath a workshop organized by the provincial Education department in December 1999, a teacher-participant of the study noted how the old ways are maintained for gaining political capital:

> Some of our school directors (heads) continue speaking like Brezhnev, as if they are in a session of the Congress of the Communist party. Everyone supports the idea because it is fashionable. Some heads said streaming is the demand of the time and market economy. I honestly do not know how streaming is connected to the demands of the time, democracy and a market economy (Interview, case 1, p. 132,

emphasis mine).

They suggested that reformers should change their approach from evaluating, extending, advising, and imposing to dialogue and communication where there is mutual learning.

> In the school you work with teachers. They are as knowledgeable and clever as the reformers. As you ask me these questions, I too assess you. I, for example, could have talked to my students, developed materials and visuals and you would have witnessed wonderful classes and would have written all the lies. But I am not a boasting person and agree that we need to demonstrate our usual practices. *But we do show unreal things to the inspectors; they take our show as true.* The next day we return to our own ways. We can show that we are with reform, but in reality we will keep searching for the basic needs. Many teachers will leave in the case of any employment opportunity (Int. 1: 53, emphasis mine).

Another teacher suggested the necessity of considering the context and realities in initiating any reform activity. Teachers should be seen as major partners in this endeavour:

> The reform has come on us and moved ahead and we are running after it. But, why should we imitate others? We need to look at what we have here. Don't you think that the reform should consider our lives too? What have you done for us? How long can we sacrifice our lives for the good of the others? *The reformers are concerned about showing that they are making many changes, not how and what the students learn.* Like the Soviet times, they want to report that they have changed this and that. That this has become more and that has increased. The students have become like experimental mice As a result the students complete grade 11and are confused. *Next, how can we reform history with no salaries, no textbooks, cold classes and hungry kids?* Our reform is again coming from the top, "you must do

it". *No one listens to teachers. In our school we have so many reform ideas but we have no support and resources to put them into practice* (Int.1: 21, emphasis mine).

Commentary

The experiences the teachers from this study, connected with the literature reviewed in the section on the socio-political and educational contexts illustrate important contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of the Soviet collapse and globalization's advancement in this part of the world. By and large, the globalization's promises have failed to deliver so far. Reforms do not necessarily bring to improvement; but when carried without considerations for their ethical implications, reforms may end up in making things worse (see Ginzburg, 1991). The rhetoric and elation over the supposed triumph of democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, independence, and better living conditions appear to have brought about authoritarianism, poverty, hunger, ethnic and religious hatred, insecurity, instability, and corruption that have resulted from the painful restructuring (Ignatieff, 1993; Keshavjee, 1998; Rashid 2002). For the majority of teachers in Tajikistan, the collapse of the USSR was untimely, sudden and shocking (Niyozov, 1996). For the MBAP, the USSR's breakdown resulted in a cut in basic supplies, an influx of civil war refugees, a reduction in paid jobs, a dramatic fall in salaries, poorer living conditions, isolation, and a shortage of land. These declines made the exotically attractive region almost unbearable to live in (Keshavjee, 1998; Niyozov, 2001).

Globalization appears to have been transforming Tajikistan, an already the poorest zone of the former Soviet Union into a subordinate, a dependent follower, a receiver of external wisdoms and solutions, a provider of raw materials, a field of experimentation, and a buffer states between the strategic zones of interest of the larger forces (Rashid, 2002). The application of market mechanisms – including privatization, charging user fees, for services previously offered free of charge, decentralizing highly centralized state bureaucracies- to resolve problems of equality of educational opportunity appears to have led to inequitable consequences may actually have proven

counter productive (Arnove & Torress, 1999, p. 10). A result of all this could be the further social and ethnic division of the society that may lead to the instability and underdevelopment.

At present, the teachers and together with them the majority of the population appear to survive under penetrating cold without heating and electricity. They are dressed in clothes that are worn away and unable to keep them warm. The majority of them might be hungry, with many perhaps not having eaten bread, let alone butter and meat. Their schools are closed due to the penetrating cold where the children shiver and are unable to hold pens, and where the sound of coughing is more frequent than any other sign of existence. Both the teachers and their student perhaps suffer from several diseases. Their salaries are meager with which they cannot support their large families. Their life and work are fragmented and their fundamental concerns ignored. They work within a broken economy and a confused society. Their devotion, commitment to work, their honesty and belief in justice appear to be largely taken for granted and often manipulated. They are subjected to top-down approaches and outside-in trainings, where external ideas are projected upon them and where their knowledge and wisdom is largely ignored. Post-Perestroika, they have found themselves in a stage of rapid transition, for which they were not ready. So many drastic changes in such a short time have overwhelmed them. All certainties and clear-cut answers have gone. Contradictory realities-- inspirations and frustrations, joy and pain, separation and co-existence, humiliation and honor, peace and turbulence, poverty and hope sharply compete with each other. It has been painful to accept the decline of the status of teacher and education. It humiliates these dignified teachers to beg and work for others and to be at the mercy of the humanitarian supplies in order to make their ends meet. Corruption, drugs, Mafia, nepotism and bribery have flourished, while opportunities for growth have diminished. The geographical remoteness, financial poverty, and political insecurity have made things even more difficult.

Despite all these hardships, the teachers continue working with limited recognition and remuneration. They continue their struggle for justice, voice, identity, and ethics and who work against increasing marginalization and impoverishment by powerful local and global forces.

Despite many reasons to leave teaching and to become cynical, they remain because they share the love of the students and because they care about their community and its identity. Their children, their students and their spiritual traditions help them find meaning in their work, endure sacrifices, and refine their vision of education and society. These teachers appear to have consciously accepted that they have to live a debilitating existence in the name of a future, which only their students may see. Their vision is infused with the spirituality and ethics of service so that their communities, and with it, the interconnected world, do not fall back into despair.

These teachers resist the reductionist approaches to teaching and education. They exhibit a broad notion of educator and teaching that begins with the children but goes beyond classroom walls to reach their community. For them teaching is a practice lived through days and nights, with the young and adult at homes, in the streets, and at schools. Their teaching goes beyond limited notions of subject matter and methods of teaching; it includes vision, ethics, purposes, relations, emotions and spirituality. As such it challenges the limited categorizations of teaching and surpasses single theoretical frameworks. Their practice and theory of teaching is broad, complex and contradictory, and infused with tensions and dilemmas (Berlak & Berlak, 1986; Britzman, 1991). Again, these contradictory realities of their teaching are not simply an issue of teacher mentality or weakness: Their dilemmas and tensions reveal the fundamental contradictions of educational and societal reform in the post- Soviet emerging societies.

Conclusion

This article was based on the findings of a qualitative study conducted in rural, mountainous Tajikistan in 1999. The study reveals how the promises of Globalization's related Soviet collapse have largely proved false and how have they contributed to the intensification and impoverishment of teachers' life and work (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Based on the teachers' voices, and the connection of these voices with the local and global context, history, and culture, one could state that the reasons for teachers and the populations misery are not simply personal.

Neither are they entirely internal, or outcomes of Soviet past: These reasons are also very much global and external. Their marginalization is socially, historically and globally constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Escobar, 1995). These teachers private problems speak to public and systemic issues. Their personal and local concerns expose global desires and mistakes. Indeed, these dilemmas and concerns resonate with those of the teachers in not only developing but also industrialized countries (Avalos, 1985; Dove, 1986, Farrell & Oliveira, 1993; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Thiessen, 1993; Welch, 2000). The challenge is well put by Farrell & Oliveira:

> The irony in the case of developing countries is that choices are reduced, the price of mistake is higher, and conditions for success are more limited. Yet to overcome these problems, they have to be more efficient than industrial countries have been (1993, p. 22).

Liston & Zeichner (1991), building on Connell's research on teachers' work (1985), point out the implications of the kind of emotional upset described in this paper for teachers' work:

> When a teacher committed to democratic education (or his/her set of articulated educational aims) encounters intolerable work conditions, the result is not simply the experience of one more "encumbrance," but rather a sense of personal and professional frustration. When a teacher encounters situations in which the effort it takes to create his/her educational relationships is continually frustrated, it takes a toll on the teacher. And when a teacher reacts to those situations with new educational strategies and approaches, the teachers' professional identity is at stake(Liston & Zeichner, 1991, p. 8).

Not everything is gloomy, however. The arrival of the spiritual guide (the Aga Khan) and his network, other NGOs, the establishment of peace, the availability of responsible people in the official structures, and the enviable commitment and dedication of the teachers are some of the

glimpses of the genuine hope for a better future. This hope, however, as the teachers reveal, is vulnerable; it is contingent upon the kind of approaches taken by the NGOs and the local administrations, and the ethics of this approaches vis a vis the populations' dedication, trust and readiness to sacrifice. The central message of this study is well captured by many scholars' argument (e. g, Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Farrell, 1997), that there are many teachers in developing countries, who are highly knowledgeable, committed and dedicated All those who want to reform education need to seriously listen to the aesthetics and ethics of these teachers' voices, contextualise and historicize these voices; explore teachers' work and life as an integrated whole, and see them as partners in educational and societal reform.

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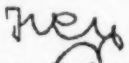
Signature:  Position: Research Fellow

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